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The Dinner Invitation



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Chapter 1 by eelir J

Almost everyone knew who Layne Vedder was. They have seen him on TV, read about him on several online and paper magazines. He was constantly making headlines with revolutionary Hi-Tech inventions that his company was introducing in this world. But, not much was known about his private life. Beside employing the best people for personal security, he also employed several artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms to keep his cyber footprint at minimum. There were many aspects of his business and private life that was unknown for public. Like his pet project - an incredibly advanced AI that would create detailed psychological profile of every human in the planet.

People did not know about his secret dinners as well. Every year he would send out invitations to seemingly six random people. They would have a letter delivered in their hand stating that some gentleman had invited them to a very discreet dinner. They were told to keep this invitation a secret if they wanted to see the award of \$100K for attending the dinner. He would know if anyone broke the silence rule as he would bug the guests before even sending the invitations.

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Chapter 2 by J



Six people from all over the world, who had never met before and who would never meet again. No one would know they were missing, either. The perfect crime, perhaps, if it could be.

There aren't that many ways to test an AI that judges people. It seems to be that the best way to do so is to take a controlled environment and people whose backstories have been perfectly mapped out through the internet's powers, and see what the AI thinks they will do.

Of course, this test, well - it's best to begin it.

The table is set for seven. They all show up in separate limousines from the airport, arrive and sit down to dinner with him. The house has no staff. They watch as he prepares the food himself, a work of art, and they all sit down to eat.

The lights flicker. There is a shot.

Layne Vedder lies dead, face down on his plate. There is a gun lying on the table, and none of them have moved an inch.

Most worryingly of all to the six strangers, sitting shocked around the table, wanting only the promised money, or maybe now to get out of the locked down mansion, is the bloody looking bullet hole in his chest.

Chapter 3 by TeTe



All six visitors sat silently in their places looking from Layne's dead body with his head in his plate and the gun at the other end of the table.

As if reading each other's mind they all got up in unison to pick up the gun until they could find a way out.

The lights flicker again. For a few seconds it was dark. As the lights come back on the gun isn't on the table anymore.

"OK. Let's all get something straight. I don't wanna die, and I think neither one of you do too."

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"All I wanna do is get the hell outta here 'fore them cops show up!"

A girl, who looked to be the youngest in the group, spoke with a very strong American country accent. She was dressed well, hair done, but was missing a couple of teeth.

"I guess it's safer for all of us as a group to look for an exit. As soon as we get out of here **NO ONE** will ever talk of this again! Can we all agree on that?"

An older man, very tall and thin with salt and pepper hair and a thin white moustache said looking into everyone's eyes. He seemed to be a lot older than he looked and his voice was like one of those old radio announcers.

An Asian woman, who was sitting on the right side of Layne Vedder straightened herself from on top of the table, trying to reach for the gun. She cleared her throat, fixed her hair and looked at each person in front of her.

"I believe that if we are here there is a purpose for it. If our host was killed before giving us the money or even before saying if this was a hoax or not, neither one of us is to blame. There must be someone else in this house, who most likely has had the time to secure the house and is watching us. Anything we do might make the person responsible even more angry. I'm sure one of you has told a family member where you would be. If we can find a safe place, I'm sure soon enough we will be rescued."

She sounded so proper that the bright orange dress she was wearing didn't seem to fit her at all. As she looked around the room, all of them thought if they had told anyone.

"I don't have family. I work from home so no one will notice me gone. I don't even have a dog!! I don't talk to my neighbors, and I live in a house far from the city...I doubt anyone will ever notice!"

The woman who was sitting across the Asian woman said. She looked to be of Latin decent. Her accent pointed to being Brazilian as did her tan skin and shapely body. As she talked she

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Definately cursing in Russian, the last man who had been closest to the gun said. He was so white that as he cursed it was possible to see the veins on his face. His eyes were extremely blue. He smelled like an old tavern, whiskey and cigars.

"There is no need to worry special guests. Non of you will get out alive. So please, just sit back, enjoy your dinner and wait your turn to die."

A mechanical voice said as if coming from speakers. All of them looked around but saw nothing.

Chapter 4 by Ayla k



The mechanical voice made fear seep into every bone of every person present in the room. All of them waited in apprehension as if waiting for each other to make the first move. But not even one showed the slightest movement, all sat in pensive silence contemplating the words of the ominous robotic voice. The first to pierce the silence was the wail of the Asian woman garbed in that horrible orange traditional dress, the wail so shrill that everyone one of them had their ear drums rattled. Her previous gallant speech could not reconcile with her painful wail.

" My hand, my hand...it's gone" "I can't feel it, O' God" Her sobs had as if fortuitously turned on the glaring white lights back and with it her plaintive sobs came to an end. All six pairs of eyes saw that the cut hand she was mourning was not cut at all. Baffled by her own seemingly false reaction, she looked up to meet the glares of the invited fives.

" **Блядь**, did you think that would be relaxing?! You ugly scum!" the Russian rebuked her.

" I be damned to Hell, her wail was awful real!" the country girl said shakily.

" I swear I felt as if my left hand was cut, I wasn't lying" the Asian defended herself indignantly. The Russian seemed to be boiling with anger, his face crimson and the blue vein jutting out in his neck. The Indian was irresolute, he wasn't sure whose side to defend. The french, the old man with salt and pepper hair, sat calmly deeply analyzing the matter at hand. He put a hand on the Russian's arm to calm the storm brewing in him.

"The one who's running this show wants us to fight-" the old man was cut short by the Russian who cursed again.

Without giving him a reaction, the old man continued,

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"Just Brainstorm." the French remarked.

Just then a mechanical laugh wafted through the room but this time it wasn't far, it was quite near them.

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